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the electric interstate

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The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District: A Tenth Anniversary Report

In this issue...

The continuing saga of the South Shore line is not equal to the popular nighttime soap operas. Yet some of the same elements, save raw physical passion, are present in both. Once again, I.U. Professors George Smere and the closed chambers to see the fate of a once-mighty enterprise decided by the compromises of conflicting forces.

A far greater drama is being staged quietly in Indiana as communities prepare for the 1990 Censuses of Population and Housing. Carol Rogers and Jerry McKibben have been traveling the Hoosier state to help localities be ready for THE DAY, April 1, 1990. The number of persons counted on that day will help determine our joint destinies for the decade to come.

This is the first issue of the Indiana Business Review under the skilled hand of Brian Burton. He follows in a long line of distinguished Managing Editors and we expect that his mark will be as great as any of his predecessors. And if successful, none will note as all credit will go to, the authors and the undersigned...MJM

George M. Smerek, Jr.
Professor of Transportation, Indiana University School of Business, and the Governor's Tractor to NICTD since 1977.

A decade ago the Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad, the United States' last electric interurban railway, cited severe passenger operating losses in petitioning the Interstate Commerce Commission to discontinue all commuter service between South Bend and Chicago. In April 1977, the ICC required the railroad to continue passenger service until February 1978, enough time for the state of Indiana to begin rescue efforts. In June 1977 the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) was founded under enabling legislation passed by the 1977 Indiana General Assembly. Operating under the new state law, NICTD was created by action of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, and St. Joseph Counties to oversee South Shore commuter passenger service and provide public financial support for it.

During its first meeting, the NICTD board decided that preservation of rail passenger service was essential to the economy of Northwest Indiana. The NICTD maintained service by partially subsidizing operating losses with state and federal funds; to improve service, NICTD began the federal-grant process to purchase new rail passenger cars that would replace equipment dating to the 1920s and operating well beyond its economic life.

With strong staff support from the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), NICTD put together a small but highly dedicated staff to carry out the tasks. By January 1981 the improvements began to manifest themselves, as the first new commuter car arrived for testing, and NICTD began to fully subsidize South Shore's passenger losses. All South Shore commuter service is operated by the railroad under contract to NICTD. The district owns all the passenger rolling stock, has control of service levels and fares, and has the right to audit the railroad company.

The most visible improvement was the new cars. A total of 44 shiny, 85-foot-long, stainless steel, electric, multiple-unit, rail commuter cars were ordered from the low bidder, Nippon Sharyoku Shizoku-Kaisha, a Japanese company famed for building the Bullet Trains. Not so visible to the public were improvements NICTD made in the maintenance facilities. A new over-head crane was installed in the shops, along with a drop table to enable quick changes of wheels and motors and a wheel-turning machine that made it possible to repair flat spots in the wheels without removing the wheels from the cars. The building itself was upgraded significantly for the first time in more than 50 years and a parts storage addition was constructed. The shop building and car-inspection and servicing pits were lengthened to handle the new, longer cars.

In June 1977, the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) was created to oversee the operation and provide for public financing of South Shore commuter passenger service.

Also invisible to the public were new, solid-state, high-tech electrical substations that transformed high-voltage alternating current into the 1500 volts DC used as traction power by the South Shore trains. Miles of copper feeder cable as big around as a man's arm were installed to improve the flow of power along the electric railroad. A computer-controlled power distribution system also was installed to smooth out the supply of power to the railroad.

Other visible improvements along the South Shore included a new Gary station and the elevation of the South Shore tracks through downtown Gary, both done to help improve the South Shore's service in that city. This was not a NICTD project, but a joint effort of the Indiana Toll Road Commission, the City of...
Gary, and the Federal Highway Administration, in conjunction with the construction of new ramps to the Indiana toll road. Very much a NICTD project was a new station and headquarters building at Dune Park, where Indiana 49 crosses U.S. Route 12. A comprehensive plan has been developed for station and parking improvements in other places along the South Shore line. These will be carried out as funding becomes available.

By Thanksgiving of 1983, all service on the South Shore was being operated with the new cars, and a new era of service to Northwest Indiana was underway. Before long, two problems developed, largely as a result of the NICTD-sponsored improvements. Serious overcrowding of South Shore trains occurred during the rush hours. By 1984 it was not unusual for a six-car train with 558 seats to have 1000 passengers on board at rush hours. Indeed, of all the commuter railroads operating in the Chicago area, the South Shore trains were the most overcrowded, and even the 4-peak trains were the most utilized on any Chicago commuter railway. This problem was both gratifying and troublesome: South Shore ridership had been declining for years before NICTD involvement, but with the improvements ridership rose from 1.5 million riders in 1978 to 3 million riders in both 1985 and 1986.

Another problem was poor on-time performance from 1981 to 1985. This was caused in large part by speed limitations on the Illinois Central Gulf line upon which the South Shore service is operated between 115th Street and Randolph Street Stations in downtown Chicago. Construction work on the expansion of McCormick Place, which is built on air rights above the tracks, also slowed trains throughout the day.

The district worked first to correct the overcrowding. Until the summer of 1985, the Illinois Central Gulf had refused to let eight-car South Shore trains onto its line, claiming it would be too severe a drain on the ICG electrical substations. Difficult negotiations with the ICG finally ended in success and because NICTD cars were designed to be stingy in power utilization, ICG fears proved groundless. Starting in July 1985, four rush-hour trains were regularly operated with eight cars. Furthermore, an additional train was put into the morning schedule between Hegewisch and Randolph Street to help ease the serious overcrowding facing Hegewisch passengers on the other rush-hour trains.

Over the past decade, the South Shore has faced the serious overcrowding of trains, poor on-time performance, and a severe equipment shortage due to accidents.

To lessen the number of late arrivals, schedules were stretched so that trains left stations earlier in Indiana in order to arrive on schedule in Chicago. On-time performance, while still not satisfactory to NICTD, rose to better than 90% after a period when some months saw less than 60% performance.

The NICTD faced a severe equipment shortage after a series of accidents put a number of the new commuter cars out of service for major repairs. The most dramatic of these accidents was a head-on collision between two South Shore trains on January 21, 1985, just to the west of the Gary station. Two cars were irreparable at reasonable cost. The Regional Transportation Authority of the Chicago area (RTA) has been very helpful; this time it came to the rescue by leasing NICTD a double-decker, push/pull, diesel-powered train. This will continue in service until either sufficient South Shore cars can be returned to operating condition to meet demand, or additional electric multiple-unit cars are acquired. Other major damage to the car fleet occurred on October 30, 1986, and on April 1, 1987. One car from the October wreck has also been deemed irreparable.

At the beginning of a pictorial trip along the South Shore Line, a train rolls by Hudson Lake Station. This and all other photos in this article by Don Kaplan.
The problems noted above were the simple ones. The serious problems facing NICTD were the financial ones. Coming into office in 1981, the Reagan Administration immediately announced its aim of doing away completely with federal operating aid for urban mass transportation by 1984. While the White House has never succeeded in eliminating transit operating aid, it has managed to cut the amount of money available, in part because Congress has had to lower appropriations to help control the skyrocketing federal deficit. The administration’s posture caused NICTD strong concern about future Indiana rail commuter service.

The Reagan Administration has substantially cut federal operating aid for urban mass transportation.

While federal aid has been waning, NICTD has received generous help from the State of Indiana. In addition to funds from a state program that supports all Indiana mass transportation, two special funds provide NICTD with money to cover operating costs and help match federal operating and capital grants. Even so, it was clear by 1983 and 1984 that the state felt that it had done enough for the South Shore commuter service, and that responsibility for covering the shortfall created by federal cuts rested with some other area, possibly with local government in Northwest Indiana.

In 1983 NICTD proposed buying the South Shore Railroad, owned by the Chessie System since 1967. The South Shore enjoyed a profitable freight service, and NICTD’s idea was to purchase the railroad, hire a competent staff to manage it, and use the freight profits to help counterbalance the inevitable passenger financial losses. The district had been raising fares steadily since 1980 and was covering close to 60% of costs out of the farebox, well above the national average. However, raising fares too sharply all at once would drive passengers away.

Hard lobbying in the Indiana General Assembly in 1984 won NICTD the powers to buy the railroad, powers that would not become effective until May 1, 1985. Governor Robert D. Orr’s signature was barely dry on the legislation when a new investor group, the Venango River Corporation (VRC), purchased the South Shore from the Chessie System. In its efforts to find additional sources of funds, NICTD was back to square one and losing ground.

Shortly after the purchase of the South Shore by VRC on September 28, 1984, NICTD became concerned about sharply rising operating costs. Because of the continued cuts in federal operating money, NICTD management and trustees feared the district would not be able to pay its contractual obligation to the railroad.

So serious was the operating cost increase under VRC ownership that, by the autumn of 1985, NICTD felt that it was in serious danger of defaulting on its payments to the railroad. It was then decided that NICTD would approach the 1986 General Assembly for local taxing authority in order to provide the support necessary to keep the commuter service running. The NICTD was unique among major Indiana public transit bodies in that it had no local taxing authority. However, instead of giving NICTD local taxing authority, the Indiana General Assembly created a legislative study commission to determine if the rail commuter service was really necessary to Northwest Indiana (after $70 million had already been spent on capital improvements alone). The study commission also was to determine whether the railroad and NICTD were each doing their respective jobs well. Because of the apparently serious threat to the continuation of the service, the General Assembly saw to it that a loan of $2.6 million was arranged for NICTD from the state’s Public Deposit Insurance Fund (PDIF). Part of the loan was used to pay for the costs of the legislative study commission, which NICTD had to bear.
As 1986 wore on, it appeared that the financial situation was becoming more serious and more threatening to the continuation of the passenger commuter service. The South Shore Railroad's costs, which NICTD had contracted to repay, were exceeding the NICTD budget for 1986 by over $100,000 a month. In August 1986 the Commuter District proposed sharp cutbacks in service to save a million dollars, a necessity considering the costs, and to ward off default. Under the proposal to the Interstate Commerce Commission, the 37 trains a day operated at that time would be reduced to 17 trains a day, with operations only at rush hour. Weekend and holiday service would be suspended. In late August, at a dramatic public meeting of the NICTD board, the South Shore railroad offered to continue operations on the basis of the existing contract on a fixed-price basis. This offer was good until the end of the General Assembly session on April 30, 1987. It was hoped that the 1987 General Assembly would legislate local taxing authority for NICTD to assure continued passenger service. NICTD accepted the railroad's offer and pushed back the date on the train-off petition to the ICC until the end of April, 1987.

Through the spring and summer of 1986, the legislative study commission labored on. It hired an experienced consulting firm to conduct a detailed study, and carried out a series of public hearings in Northwest Indiana. The study commission reported in the fall of 1986 that the South Shore commuter service was indeed necessary, since it was responsible for at least $70 million in salaries and wages, earned in Chicago, that were brought back to Indiana each year. The commission also reported that NICTD had competently managed the service. Indeed, NICTD was faulted mainly for not doing a better job of marketing the service. Marketing wasn't necessary for the rush-hour trains, which were already overcrowded, but the consultants urged a better selling job for the off-peak trains in order to help boost revenues at virtually no additional cost. Furthermore, the consultants and the commission felt that NICTD had not sufficiently sold the idea of local taxes to the public and elected officials in Northwest Indiana. NICTD may have done too good a job in arranging for special state aid programs. Perhaps the local officials had come to believe that, whatever the problem, the State of Indiana would come to the fiscal rescue of the South Shore commuter service.

By 1986, the local officials had perhaps come to believe that, whatever the problem, the State of Indiana would come to the fiscal rescue of the South Shore commuter service.

Legislation was introduced in the 1987 General Assembly to provide local tax support. With such support, NICTD hoped to control the skyrocketing costs of the railroad by no longer automatically contracting with the South Shore to operate trains. Instead, NICTD would seek bids from management companies to manage the actual operations of the railroad. It was expected that Amtrak, Metra, some other private railroads, the South Shore Railroad, the professional transit management firms, and perhaps a management company formed by the railroad unions would all bid on the operating contract. Competition between the bidders would assure the lowest possible price for the service.

The key to a competitively bid operation was a trackage-rights agreement with the South Shore. Under such an agreement, NICTD would pay a predetermined fee for use of the trackage, and the successful bidder would operate the service. In addition, over a period of several years, NICTD would buy all of the passenger assets from the railroad.

In the pull and tug of legislation in the 1987 General Assembly, the South Shore Railroad sought largely to relieve itself of NICTD's surveillance. The South Shore worked with several legislators to find some way of getting sufficient funds to either provide the service or protect it.

At 11th and Oak Streets in Michigan City.
self against losses. The railroad made an offer proposing that it receive no subsidies in return for not having to deal with the district, charging that NICTD was looking over its shoulder and trying to tell it how to do business. The South Shore wanted guarantees of public money to pay for certain things not under its control, such as the Illinois Central Gulf trackage lease agreement, the traction power used to propel the trains, and liability insurance. The costs involved would be about $3 million to $5 million per year. The railroad wanted full control over fares and service levels. If NICTD remained in existence, it would be only a pass-through agency to provide the money for the aforementioned guarantees. The legislators supporting the position assumed that the South Shore would continue the NICTD's level of service. The railroad had discussed sharp fare increases, but it later agreed to eschew fare hikes of 55% for an increase of 5% a year and hikes above that if costs went up sharply.

The railroad's position was understandable because in the winter and spring of 1987 it was attempting to purchase the so-called "Kansas City line" from the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad, a line the VRC would name the Chicago, Missouri & Western. In essence the CM&W was the old Chicago & Alton Railway, which the ICG had purchased in its merger with the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad in 1971 and 1972. The VRC envisioned the possibility of a service from Kansas City through Chicago to South Bend; this would be a most attractive route for freight, because while it would run through Chicago it would bypass the crowded switching yards in that city. The problems with NICTD payments would affect the South Shore's cash flow and have a serious negative impact on South Shore's negotiations with the ICG. At the same time, it would be very beneficial to South Shore management if NICTD could continue to make payments on a timely basis. A sore point was the delay factor; NICTD never missed a payment, but until the loan from the PDB was made, in the fall of 1986, NICTD was usually at the contractual limit of six months "late" in paying. This delay reflected NICTD's own cash-flow problems.

An audit of the South Shore, completed in the fall of 1986, revealed that NICTD's financial plight was not so bad after all.

In a remarkable change of events in January and February of 1987, NICTD discovered that its financial plight was not so bad after all. A key factor was the NICTD financial audit of the South Shore for the year 1985. The district began this complex audit in June 1986; and it went on through the fall of that year. The CPA firm employed by NICTD reported that the South Shore had charged NICTD $2.2 million more than was called for under the cost-allocation agreement between the two parties. This was finally settled in early 1987 with NICTD being relieved of paying more than $1.8 million to the South Shore.

Concurrently with this, NICTD negotiated an adjustment of funds with the Regional Transportation Authority in Chicago. The RTA needed more federal capital dollars while NICTD needed more federal operating dollars. The federal block grant money goes to the Chicago and Northwest Indiana urbanized area and is earmarked for different uses. It has been expected that NICTD would get only $1.8 million; happily, negotiations produced $3 million. Thanks to the audit adjustment and the RTA negotiations, NICTD's financial picture brightened greatly. Instead of being in danger of running out of funds, NICTD had sufficient money to continue paying for the passenger service through all of 1987. Given some cost control on the part of the railroad and perhaps a small fare increase, NICTD could continue to pay for the service through 1988.

The VRC's plans for acquiring ICG's Kansas City Line, and indeed the rail-

Stopped at the Beverly Shores Station.
road's future, were in jeopardy if the General Assembly did not provide some sort of aid to bear the costs of the passenger service. To force the issue, it petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission on March 18, 1987, to discontinue all passenger service effective April 30. NICTD immediately counterpetitioned, requesting that the ICC investigate the situation thoroughly. The NICTD position was supported vigorously by Governor Orr, U.S. Senators Richard Lugar and Dan Quayle, and First District Congressman Peter Visclosky. Members of the General Assembly reacted strongly, feeling the railroad was putting a gun to their heads. Further reaction came when the legislators found that the South Shore intended to reduce passenger service by a third or more, contrary to their assumptions. The sympathy and support which the railroad had enjoyed in the session evaporated. Indeed, a piece of pending legislation was amended to mandate NICTD's condemnation of the South Shore property if the railroad ever again sought to discontinue passenger service.

At the end of the 1987 General Assembly, there was still no taxing authority for the Commuter District. The basic flaw in the original legislation remained. Months of vigorous and difficult work and furtive negotiation produced little of real worth.

The commuter service is a vital link between the residents of Northwest Indiana and the steadily growing job market in Chicago's central business district.

In establishing the legislative study commission to examine rail commuter service in Northwest Indiana, Governor Orr had charged that group and the 1987 General Assembly to find a solution to the financial cliff-hanger that had faced NICTD since the federal cutback began. The General Assembly mountain labored and gave birth to a mouse. A bill that finally passed imposed fussy, largely useless red tape. The NICTD board was enlarged to nine members by the requirement that the presidents of the four county councils, or their appointees, serve. It was hoped that this would help sensitize the fiscal part of county government to the service's worth and NICTD's need for local tax support.

While the 1987 General Assembly was thrashing with the problem, individual members urged the South Shore and NICTD to negotiate. Some even threatened to mandate negotiation. That was not necessary because by mid-April the two parties were working together. By the end of April the contract has been extended to the end of 1987 with any of the three parties—NICTD, South Shore, and the Chicago RTA—eligible to initiate extension of the contract through 1988. The contract is of the not-to-exceed variety and requires NICTD to supply $6,150,000 to support the South Shore passenger service. The district estimates it will have $6,400,000 available and, because of increasing ridership, the level of NICTD revenues may reach as high as $6,700,000.

In the long run, some form of local tax support for the South Shore rail passenger operation is necessary if this valuable service is to continue to enrich Northwest Indiana's economy. The $70 million annual direct benefit to Indiana in wages and salaries is but a part of the role that the South Shore commuter service, supported by NICTD, plays in the region. In the near future, the economy of Northwest Indiana must make major adjustments if it is to recover from the devastating impact of the serious decline in heavy industry that affected all America in the 1980s. Northwest Indiana, perhaps hit worst of all, was a microcosm of the painful adjustments affecting the entire U.S. economy.

The commuter service is a vital link, a lifeline to the steadily increasing job market in the Chicago central business district for the current residents of Northwest Indiana. The passenger service is also an excellent selling tool for others employed in downtown Chicago who...
wish to live in a pleasant place at relatively low expense in comparison with the highly developed and often highly expensive suburban areas in Illinois. The South Shore commuter service, avoiding the badly overcrowded highways leading to the Loop, provides both a critical link in joining Indiana with Chicago and a good reason for more people to live in Indiana and lend their economic strength to the region and the state. The NICTD-supported South Shore passenger service is a major asset.

After two difficult years, NICTD intends to adopt a vigorous, future-oriented posture. In the next few years NICTD will seek to further animate the regional economy. A new terminal in South Bend is one major step, and stations will be renovated or newly constructed at Hammond, Michigan City, and East Chicago. Improvement and enlargement of the parking lot at East Chicago is in the advanced-planning stage. Other smaller-volume stations will be upgraded as well. The RTA is planning major improvements in the busy Hegewisch Station in Illinois, and after much delay, renovation of Randolph Street Station has begun. The NICTD probably will make some of these improvements in conjunction with private developers to relieve the public purse as much as possible of expenditures for station improvements and security.

The challenge of the Third Millennium lies only a few years ahead. Given adequate support, NICTD can help the Northwest Indiana economy in facing this challenge.

Additional commuter cars, to relieve overcrowding and permit operation of additional trains or longer trains, are a vital part of the future service picture. District management started discussions with car builders in September. New grade-crossing protection is important to make the railroad safer, especially in light of several serious grade-crossing accidents in recent years. Such protection is also vital to a speedup of the service to help reduce travel time and compete better in the market area. A newly catenary system (the catenary is the overhead wire above the tracks that carries the electricity to operate the trains), less subject to breakage in bitter cold weather, and a new signal system, to permit higher speeds and safer running, also are major capital improvements for the near future.

The district will investigate some expansion of service through more tie-ins with local bus service and it will study extending NICTD rail service along existing rail lines into the southern parts of Lake and Porter counties.

The service improvements and expansion are key factors in the future economy of Northwest Indiana. NICTD will be working hard in the near future to carry its message to the public and to local and state officials. Given adequate support, NICTD can help strengthen the economy of the region it serves to face the challenge of the Third Millennium only a few years ahead.
Local Review Programs and the 1990 Census

Carol Rogers and Jerry McKibben

Carol Rogers is external programs user services coordinator, and Jerry McKibben is a research demographer, for the Indiana Business Research Center.

The 1990 decennial census will mark the twenty-first time in U.S. history that the American population will have been counted and analyzed. The census' roots are in the Constitution, so it is appropriate that this article appears in the year of its bicentennial. When the delegates to the Constitutional Convention convened in 1787, they decided that the distribution of the population would serve as the basis for taxes and representation in the lower house of Congress. Article I, Section II therefore requires that a count occur at least once every 10 years, a wording that has encouraged some groups to lobby for a census every five years. Since 1970 the Census has charted America's growth and development, helping both the public and private sectors plan and allocate resources.

Preparation for the 1990 census began six years ago at the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Because accuracy is a primary objective, the bureau is taking steps to improve coverage for 1990 by heightening awareness and improving procedures, thus reducing the possibility that people will be missed. (The estimated undercount was 3.5% in 1970, 2.0% in 1980.)

Local governments have an opportunity to ensure complete coverage by participating in local review programs, in which they review housing-unit counts both before and after the census is taken.

Indiana has a major stake in a complete count. The apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives, the allocation of federal funds, the redistricting of the state legislature, planning and funding for education, social services, and infrastructure maintenance and improvement, all are based in part on the number and kinds of people living within its borders.

The Need for a Complete Count

While the census' primary purpose remains the apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives, over the past 50 years the census has found other uses that are equally important. Billions of dollars are allocated to state and local governments, through more than 80 federal programs, based on the population and its characteristics. These include wastewater-disposal grants, economic-development grants, health planning, social-service block grants, highway construction, education, and aid to the handicapped. Indiana's share in 1985 of the federal pie averaged $126 per person, or about $700 million a year. Most of these funds are paid directly to the appropriate government and assist in providing basic social services to local citizens. Thus, census accuracy is an important issue, not only for states but for local governments as well.

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The census results have become invaluable tools for urban, social, and government planners. When planners determine how many schools are needed, the capacity of the water and sewage plants, how much road repair will be necessary, where to locate a new shopping mall or restaurant, and what the demand for care for the elderly or the very young will be, they need accurate information on the current and projected size and composition of their communities. Population

![Indiana's Percentage of U.S. Population](image)

On April 1, 1990, the Census Bureau will count the people of Indiana. The growth rate for Indiana population for the decade between 1980 and 1990 will be substantially lower than the national average, approximately 1.1% compared to about 11% for the U.S. Thus, Indiana’s proportion of the nation’s population is declining. If current trends continue, Indiana’s 10th seat in the House of Representatives will be to use a term familiar to Hoosiers, on the bubble.

An undercount of as little as 10,000 people could cost Indiana a voice in Congress. This situation is very similar to the one after the 1980 census. New York was assigned the 435th representative in that apportionment, and Indiana was next in line. If the census had shown 7,500 more people, Indiana would have retained its 11th seat (7,500 people would have been approximately 1/10 of 1% of Indiana’s 1980 population).

The results of current projection show that the population of Indiana in 1990 will be approximately 5,550,000. If there is a very complete count, then that number could rise to 5,570,000. However, an incomplete count could drop the population to as low as 5,520,000.

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On this 50,000-person margin rests not only a congressional seat, but also close to $6 million in federal funding every year for 10 years. This amount could be even higher, depending on the count’s accuracy in certain segments of the population. For example, many federal programs are aimed at low-income

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people and the elderly. If the overall Indiana count is fairly accurate, but the count of the poor or of the elderly is low, then the proportion of funds allocated to Indiana for those groups is reduced.

Of particular concern for undercounting are minority males 18 to 30 years of age, non-English-speaking people, the homeless, and people living in urban areas.

While there is rarely a problem of overcounting people in a given area, undercounting is a relatively common problem with the census, especially with certain population groups. Of particular concern for undercounting are minority males 18 to 30 years of age, non-English-speaking people, the homeless, and people living in urban areas. Many of these groups and people living in densely populated areas are difficult to find, as the census count depends on complete knowledge of all living quarters. Also of concern are people who overstate their income, which results in lowering the count of people actually living below the poverty line.

How Indiana Can Work Toward a Complete Count

The 1987 workshop was offered in 19 locations throughout Indiana during September and October of this year. Designed by the Census Bureau, the training sessions were conducted by the Indiana State Library and the Indiana Business Research Center (coordinating agencies in the Indiana State Data Center Program) and the Indiana State Board of Health (a member of the Federal/State Cooperative for Population Estimates Programs). All local governments were invited to the workshops, with average attendance of between 15 and 25 people. Many of those attending indicated interest in pursuing the program.

Since all the census questionnaires going to Indiana residents are mailed, it is essential that all housing units be accounted for before address labels are printed.

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The Local Review Program has two stages: pre-census review and post-census review. In November 1989, before the census is taken, local governments will receive preliminary estimates of housing units by census block (maps will arrive that summer). Local governments can challenge the census count by reporting the discrepancy between their own estimates of housing units and supplying documentation of objective proof such as estimates based on utility connections, building and demolition permits, property tax records, or other similar documents. Most communities will focus their efforts on areas where high growth has occurred since 1980, or where they think there may be problems. Since all the census questionnaires going to Indiana residents are mailed, it is essential that all housing units be accounted for before address labels are printed.

The post-census stage takes place a few months after census day (April 1, 1990). At that time, local officials will receive another set of maps and a preliminary count of housing units. Governments have 10 working days to review the counts and submit discrepancies.

Success in other states coupled with as complete a count as possible in Indiana puts us at least on the same level.

There is significant work involved for local governments. But John G. Keane, the bureau's director, points out, "It offers local government officials the opportunity to have a direct say in the operation of one of the federal government's oldest and most important activities.

Local Review's Importance

No one, even at the Census Bureau, disputes that an undercount is inevitable in some areas. As has been discussed in this article, it is the relative size of that undercount that can be critical in determining governmental representation, funding, and planning. Indiana would benefit from a comparatively small undercount in the state. Other states, such as California, Florida, Texas, Illinois, and Michigan, have implemented local-review programs to ensure as complete a count as possible in their respective states. Success in those states and coupled with a not-so-successful count in Indiana would substantially lower Indiana's official share of the U.S. population in 1990. Success in other states coupled with as complete a count as possible in Indiana puts us at least on the same level in the determination of representation and funding allocations.

In this issue...

The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District:
A Tenth Anniversary Report

A decade ago the Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad sought to discontinue commuter service between South Bend and Chicago, citing severe passenger operating losses. The state attempted to rescue this vital component of the Northwest Indiana economy—in June 1977 the NICTD was founded.

By 1986, some felt that NICTD had failed in selling the idea of local taxes to the public and elected officials in Northwest Indiana. NICTD may have done too good a job in arranging for special state aid programs.

After two difficult years, NICTD intends to adopt a vigorous, future-oriented posture, and to further animate the regional economy.